



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

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## Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on December 21, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at Warren Town Hall. The presiding officer was Karen Dionne. Board members present were Mark Lombari, Kathleen Tucciarone, Ben Terry, and Tyler Dixon. Sara Volino and Walter Conklin were absent. Town Manager Jan Reitsma was also in attendance. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB.

### **1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of November 16, 2015.**

The minutes from the regular meeting held on November 16, 2015 were reviewed by the board via email. A motion was made by Mr. Terry to approve the minutes, the motion was seconded by Mr. Lombari, and all members were in favor.

### **2. Meeting with interim Town Manager Jan Reitsma.**

The meeting opened with an introduction to Jan Reitsma, the new interim Town Manager. Mr. Reitsma stated that he considers economic development to be at the top of his agenda and he would like to work together with the EDB to accomplish goals such as improving the appearance of the business district and filling empty storefronts along Main Street. Mr. Reitsma said that he was in the process of investigating state funding opportunities to benefit Warren; the board also discussed the RI Foundation and RI Commerce grant opportunities with upcoming application deadlines in early February. Mr. Reitsma commented that the Recreation Department is interested in applying for the RI Foundation grant.

At this time Ms. Dionne introduced the EDB's current work plan and proceeded to review this document item by item with Mr. Reitsma. This was an opportunity for Mr. Reitsma to gain an understanding of the board's past achievements as well as an opportunity to plan work plan items for 2016-2017. When the board discussed issues with sign clutter, for example on the intersection of Main Streets and Water Streets, Mr. Reitsma asked the board to very specific with projects going forward. He explained that it would be easier for him to prioritize, organize and collaborate with other town departments, such as the Department of Public Works, if projects are based on very specific tasks. When discussing past efforts to coordinate signage enforcement with the zoning official, Mr. Reitsma asked that the EDB be proactive by creating an inventory of zoning issues that need to be

addressed. In short, Mr. Reitsma stressed that town committees need to be specific to ensure that his office can address issues proactively.

The board discussed the status of the Storefront Improvement Program. Mr. Reitsma said that he will be able to update the board on the status of Warren's CDGB funding for this and other projects, including funding for Main Street/business district improvements such as planters. Mr. Reitsma stated that the town is hiring a new town planner and a part-time grant writer which will help coordinate projects like the Storefront Improvement Program. Also, he suggested that the EDB be proactive in meeting business owners. Ms. Dionne introduced the EDB speaker program. Mr. Reitsma was supportive of the EDB hosting a business open house, which would be held as an open meeting of the EDB. He suggested the meeting could be a useful workshop by introducing small business owners to beneficial government programs. Mr. Reitsma suggested that the EDB compile an inventory of current businesses and available business spaces throughout town. The board briefly discussed the new municipal website.

Mr. Reitsma left the meeting at this time.

### **3. Discussion and action on 2016-2017 EDB budget for submission to Town Manager by January 15, 2017.**

Ms. Dionne made a motion to request \$750.00 for a speaker for the EDB Spring 2016 Open Business Forum, the motion was seconded by Mr. Lombardi, and all members were in favor.

Ms. Tucciarone made a motion that \$1,200.00 annually (\$100.00 per meeting) be budgeted for the EDB Secretary, the motion was seconded by Mr. Dixon, and all members were in favor.

### **4. Discussion of RI Foundation and RI Commerce grant opportunities (application deadlines in early February 2017).**

This agenda item was discussed as part of Agenda Item 2.

### **5. Presentation and discussion of preliminary EDB Work Plan for 2016-2017.**

The main discussion of the Work Plan was covered as part of Agenda Item 2. Mr. Dixon stated that he will coordinate a meeting with Mr. Eames to discuss identifying and prioritizing zoning issues in the business district. He will form a work group with Mr. Conklin; they will report back to the board next month.

A motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Tucciarone, the motion was seconded by Mr. Dixon, and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald  
January 25, 2016.

